



15 - 19 March 2004

### Report 1 - 14th March

#### 5am: Saturday 13th March

Frank Fittipaldi of the Aurora team completes the partial charge for Aurora's new battery pack in readiness for a shakedown in Tasmania. Kon Kotsonis, Rob Shandley, Dennis Burns and David Fewchuk make it to Port Melbourne by 7:30am to board the Spirit of Tasmania. It was not fully booked, but hundreds of cars and trucks were fed into the hull of this new Spirit of Tasmania boat for the 10-hour trip across Bass Strait. This car and passenger ferry was recently purchased from duty in Greece and was a well-equipped and comfortable ship. Departing from Melbourne at 9:15, it took about 2 hours to reach the heads of Port Phillip Bay; a surprisingly rough strip of water before entering Bass Strait. Most of the passengers seemed to want more sleep, as did the Aurora guys, and the 10 hours passed fairly slowly. It was a calm trip. At half-point, we passed the second Spirit of Tasmania ferry going in the opposite direction. Two trips a day from two destinations attest to the success of Tasmanian tourism.





The Orbital supplied Ford Festiva and the Ford Falcon with trailer finally disembarked in Devonport at 7:30pm, and headed south to Kempton. This is a well-known historic town not far north of Hobart, and we were booked to be at the Wilmot Arms Inn by 10:30pm. Hosts Tony and Josephine were still up, made tea and coffee and showed us our period-style rooms. We needed sleep!



### **Sunday 14th March**

Dennis was the first up at 6am, on Sunday, and had us all at breakfast by 7am. We decided that we would test the solar car immediately in the 40km trip to the Baskerville racetrack. First of all the car needed a thorough check of the new batteries and other electrical components, and a short test run up and down the deserted main street of Kempton. Most things seemed OK, and we set off on the main highway to get to the Baskerville racetrack. The cars needed fuel, so we stopped at the Caltex station at Bagdad, mistakenly shown on TV during the Iraq war.



Actually, this was early practice for the conditions we expect to encounter in the Phaethon 2004 event in Greece. A large crowd was gathering for the 50th anniversary race-meet of the Hobart Sporting Car Club, and the appearance of a sun-powered racecar on the entry road certainly turned some heads. Club president Ray Williams guided us into the infield where the competition cars were all taking their pit position. He showed us a prime display space, and we joined in the spirit of this commemorative race meet. We also met Charles Button, one of the Cam's stewards.

The program featured 23 races in total, ranging from Formula V's and HQ Holdens, to serious sports sedans and group A cars. Old and new had races, and the super-new Aurora 101 was on display. In spite of the packed program, Clerk of Course Robin Wilmot found a way to have the Aurora 101 complete a short demonstration lap on the Baskerville circuit. This was covered by a real-time interview with David Rose from RACT, a guest course commentator, about the Aurora 101 solar car and its extensive international appearance program.



The solar car display certainly turned heads. In particular, the children at the track showed enormous interest. Later in the day, we were privileged to have the famous V8 super car driver and Tasmanian native John Bowe get himself comfortably seated in the solar car. He promised to have a test drive as soon as possible. John Bowe has the honour of setting the fastest lap at Baskerville of 50.16 seconds in a Ralt RT4, way back in 1982. Peter Brock has also driven a solar car, as had Glenn Seaton, formerly associated with the 1996 Aurora Program. Of course, a real pioneer in solar car activities was Larry Perkins, who with Hans Tholstrup crossed the continent of Australia from Perth to Sydney in 1982 / 83 to excite the world about the possibilities of solar energy.



Apart from the terrific welcome we received at Baskerville, we have special thanks to Brent and Gloria Willing who provided us with a great lunch, Adrian and Helen Wild, Corporate Affairs manager for Aurora Energy, and the WIN TV crew that carried an Aurora story that evening.

What a great start to the Tasmania Experience! On the way to Hobart, we were able to stop at Princess Wharf and meet the First Mate Murray Doyle, of the Antarctic Icebreaker Aurora Australis. We plan to visit the Aurora Australis first thing tomorrow morning.

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